

March 1, 2015

To the Appropriations Committee:

Our son attended Litchfield Jazz camp for 2 years and participated in the Litchfield Jazz Festival in 2013. We think it was a wonderful experience for our son. The Jazz Festival was fantastic and really attracted large crowds. I think it is unthinkable to cut support for this remarkable cultural event which Connecticut should be so very proud of. The jazz camp is a truly wonderful and special learning environment for kids—we are so lucky to have this available in New England! **These programs should not have support cut!**

Below is important information provided by the Litchfield Jazz Festival staff:

It is critical to restore a \$50,000 Line Item to support Litchfield Jazz Festival awarded through DECD for the first time in 2014. This 20-year-old festival is the culmination of a month of jazz education at Litchfield Jazz Camp for up to 300 CT students ages 12-18 from all over the state accompanied by a month of free concerts open to the public there and around the community. This year, to honor regional citizens who assisted residents of New Orleans (the birthplace of jazz) after the Katrina disaster which marks 10 years around the time of the Festival, there will be an opening concert to celebrate the music of that great city and honor local heroes. The Festival is the first outside organization to present in the new, \$97 million Performing & Visual Arts Center at Western Connecticut State University, and the hope is to use this facility regularly in the future to bring jazz to a broader audience in CT.

Litchfield Jazz Festival provides a bonanza to state tourism, bringing 5000-7000 (50-60% out-of-state) visitors annually to the region and **leveraging over \$3 million in tourism revenues**. They rent hotel rooms, purchase items, dine in restaurants, and make return visits to the area having been introduced by the Festival.

Litchfield Jazz Festival celebrates 20 years on August 7, 8, and 9 with an all-star line-up and expects record-breaking audiences. The Festival has presented Ray Charles, Wayne Shorter, Sonny Rollins, Tito Puente, Arturo O'Farrell-winner of a 2015 Grammy Award, Diana Krall, and hundreds of others. To underscore the esteem in which the festival is held by the public and the field, its Artistic Director recently received a Jazz Hero Award from

the Jazz Journalists Association. The value of this program in preserving America's original art form-jazz-and introducing the music to both young and old around the state cannot be underestimated.

Litchfield Jazz Festival also supports a month-long educational program, Litchfield Jazz Camp, from July 12 - August 7 at Canterbury School in New Milford. This program proactively seeks students in need and provides financial support to up to 30% of its CT students, thanks to an Interdistrict Cooperative grant it has received for many years* and contributions from supporters. All students play for the public alongside major performing artists throughout the Festival weekend-**THIS IS SO FANTASTIC.**

The Festival leverages business for vendors of tents, audio, electrical equipment, 20-30 **artists and crafters** and entertainers for children in the Kids Zone. It hires regional **food vendors** who also benefit financially. Its moderate ticket price makes it **family friendly** as does **free admission** for children 12 and under. The Festival partners with a Southbury hotel, the Crowne Plaza, to accommodate artists; in turn the hotel reaps the benefit of out-of-town guests (and the state reaps the benefit of room taxes) and makes income from an after party. The annual cost of mounting the Festival averages \$400,000. Annual surveys aimed at assessing the economic impact of the Festival peg it at \$3M +.

The Litchfield Jazz Festival is the largest cultural event in Litchfield County in the summer months. It raises the profile of CT as a tourist destination and a purveyor of high-quality entertainment and top-notch arts education. It is an indisputable and sizeable economic driver for the state.

** Funding for Litchfield Jazz Camp is also under siege this year as it is an Interdistrict Cooperative project and the governor has recommended that support for the ID program be halved.*

Please do not eliminate or decrease the DECD Line Item for Litchfield Jazz Festival. The impact of this program is so tremendous!!!

Sincerely,

Heidi Auerbach
Needham, Massachusetts